
Arman Shishegar. *Ārāmgāh-e do bānu-ye ‘ilāmi az khāndān-e shāh Shutur Nāhunte pesar-e Indada. Doreh-e Ilām-now marhale 3B (hudud-e 585 tā 539 p.as m.)*

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- 1 This much-welcomed book offers a comprehensive presentation of the tomb of two elite Neo-Elamite women found by chance in 2007 during earthworks on the Ala riverbank near the village of Jubaji, about 7 km southeast of Ram Hormuz. Both women were buried in bronze “bathtub” coffins, linking them to a similar accidental discovery, some twenty-five years earlier, of a stone-lined tomb at Arjan near Behbahan housing a burial of an elite Neo-Elamite man in another bronze “bathtub” coffin. Unlike the apparently isolated Arjan tomb, however, the Jubaji chamber was found in proximity to an extensive archaeological area comprising several hills scattered with Middle and Neo-Elamite ceramic sherds. Furthermore, the presence of paving near the tomb, just above its roof level, suggests that it may have belonged to a larger complex.
- 2 The sizeable excavation volume compiled by Arman Shishegar includes 28 colour plates displaying some of the most impressive finds from the tomb and many more black and

white images. In some of the latter, particularly the in-situ photographs, it is difficult to clearly discern details, but overall the images are a very useful supplement to the text. In the introductory chapters the author discusses the circumstances of the discovery and excavation of the tomb, the site and its surrounds, the tomb architecture, including hypothetical reconstructions of the antechamber and the missing upper portion of the main chamber, the two bronze “bathtub” coffins, and the historical and funerary context of the burials. The remaining pages catalogue the assemblages according to material category (ceramic, metal, stone, bitumen, ivory/bone, faience). Every artefact is recorded and, where possible, compared with objects from other sites within and beyond Elam, and technical notes are included on any restoration and conservation measures that were taken.

- 3 The array of finds encompassed ceramics, including amphorae and small glazed/painted clay bottles; bronze and silver vessels including “chalices”, “inkwells” and “teapots”, bowls, a ladle, strainers, and long-handled pans with female-fish figurine attachments; mirrors; open gold “rings” with flared finials; elaborate iron-bladed weapons; chert arrowheads; small stone containers; a faience scarab seal; a few bitumen and ivory items; and a vast array of jewellery, clothing pins and textile ornaments in precious metal and colourful semi-precious stones. The latter included, remarkably enough, two ca. 800-year-old inscribed eyestones of the Kassite king Kurigalzu (ca.1332-1308), one of which was set into a gold bracelet worn by one of the women. Because the tomb was badly damaged by the machinery and subject to looting prior to excavation (many objects were later confiscated by the police), it is impossible to reconstruct the two individual assemblages. Nevertheless, certain inferences about the burial rites may be made from the finds preserved in situ, such as the heaps of metal vessels deposited beside the coffins along the long (north) wall of the main chamber, and the amphorae, clay cups, and glazed clay bottles found with remains of animals just outside the entrance.
- 4 While analyses of the skeletal remains identified two adult females aged around 17 and 30-35 years, and both clearly belonged to the elite classes, the title of the book is a little presumptuous in designating them as “princesses” based on an open “ring” bearing the inscription “*Shutur Nahunte son of Indada*” that was attributed to the tomb. The inscription may well refer to the Neo-Elamite king of the same name, as the author posits, but the possible reasons for its presence amongst the burial assemblage are countless. Also resting heavily on this inscription is the dating of the tomb to ca. 585-539 BC, i.e., the Neo-Elamite IIIB phase in the text-based periodisation. Yet, it should be noted that recent reassessments have shifted the reign of *Shutur Nahunte son of Indada*, a king known from the inscribed relief of Hanni of Ayapir at Kul-e Farah, into the last quarter of the 7th century.
- 5 Since only two main archaeological phases have been distinguished for the Neo-Elamite period, the rest of the assemblage, which only can be assigned broadly to the second phase extending from about 725/700 to 520 BC, contributes little to a precise dating. In any case, the author’s later date does find support in the close connection of some of the metal objects with Persian metalwork, and their relative distance from the artistic production of Assyria, in contrast to the ca. 600 BC Arjan assemblage which shows strong Assyrian links. The bronze coffins, for example, differ from the Arjan coffin and its Assyrian predecessors in structure, and certain iconographic elements of the candelabras and the fish-woman figures are unique. The stone containers, which are otherwise unattested in the Neo-Elamite period, also seem to pre-empt the Persian court’s interest

in stone vessels. To reconcile these objects with the earlier reign dates for Shutur Nāhunte we may merely need to consider the possibility that the inscribed “ring” was an heirloom, or even a funerary gift for the king who was already in the netherworld.

- 6 The Jubaji tomb has emerged as perhaps the most important single find for the study of Elam, not least because it has effectively validated the Neo-Elamite II small-find and ceramic assemblages established in the early 1980s by Pierre de Miroschedji at Susa (trench Ville Royale II, level 7b). Virtually all of the objects he assigned to this phase were found together at Jubaji in a single tomb chamber with a relatively short lifespan. This in turn highlights the extension of late Neo-Elamite culture at least as far east as the Ram Hormuz region and supports the suggestion that the major power bases had shifted away from the more exposed Susiana plain and into the Zagros foothills under Assyrian pressure in the mid-7th century.
- 7 A small downside for the reader non-conversant in Persian language is that the English overview provides minimal information on the excavation of the tomb and its contents, focusing instead on peripheral information (an outline of Elam’s history since the late fourth millennium, broad statements about Elamite funerary practices, and the possible association of the area with ancient Hidalu). In the face of the difficult circumstances of the excavation, however, the author is to be congratulated for bringing to us an extremely important body of evidence for the decades leading up to the Achaemenid ascent and further substantiating recent scholarly arguments for the Elamite heritage of Persia.

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